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SUMMARY REPORT OF ACQUISITIONS FIELD TRIP

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The field trip of the Head of the Near East Section of the Orientalia Division, Robert F. Ogden, began on January 31, 1957 and ended on August 22, 1957. In that time the following countries and political entities were visited: Spain, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, the Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Bahrain, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Italy and France, twenty in all. In spite of the almost exclusive use of the airplane, there was not enough time to include Jordan, or the centers of oriental study in Germany as had been planned. Cyprus was omitted because of the acute political troubles there. In addition, the amount of time spent in the countries from Iraq on was radically curtailed in an effort to cover the entire field of the Near East Section. Within these political divisions, visits were paid not only to the capitals but to cities important for sources of publications or library centers, amounting to 33 places in all. However, it was necessary to omit important centers in Egypt, the Arabian peninsula, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Turkey. Of the twenty countries visited, fourteen had not been covered for nine years, if at all. Of the six visited six years ago, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran and Egypt, all have suffered political change or have undergone such cultural change that a thorough going review of procurement and publication production was found to be necessary.

The idea of the trip at the outset was to visit the entire area covered by the Near East Section, as far as political conditions would permit. Special attention was given North Africa and Afghanistan, not visited previously. Although the amount of time budgeted for the countries of special interest was large, it was found necessary to increase further the time spent in all of them. As a result of the knowledge gained in North Africa, it was necessary to lengthen the stay in Egypt and the Sudan. An unusual opportunity to visit the Yemen further lengthened the time spent in the Arabian peninsula. As a result, after Iraq only the bare necessities could be covered, government publications, the commercial output currently appearing and the state of the press. The necessity of covering the itinerary from Iraq on during the summer or vacation months made it impossible to realize completely the projected aims for these countries. However, the general aim of the trip was carried out in all of the countries listed above.

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It was impossible to prescribe the kind of treatment to be given any country before actually visiting the country itself. In planning the itinerary, it was presumed that the countries visited previously would require only a checking of the machinery of acquisitions set up on previous visits. After the experience with Egypt, such a procedure could no longer be taken for granted. In Egypt, the effects of the new political alignments had to be taken into consideration for every step of the procedures to be evolved. What started out to be a checking over of existing procedures in order to be certain that all sources were covered, turned out to be a complete review of the procurement for the entire country, practically as if no visit had previously been made. One was continually facing the question, "Can the person contracting to perform some service be expected to be free to fulfill that contract?" In the end it was necessary to realign both exchange and purchasing procedures to cope with the new situation. For different reasons, something of the same procedure was necessary in Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Turkey. In Turkey it was expected that some changes would have to be made in the acquisition methods. However, just before the visit to Turkey, the Director of the National Library in Ankara was changed, a change which made it necessary to recast all of the plans for revising acquisitions procedures for Turkey.

With countries visited for the first time by the writer, a different sort of problem was presented, that of finding sources of publications some of which hardly existed one year ago. It was difficult not to get the impression that some of the officials responsible for publications in some of the new government felt that they had been given an unimportant task. It seemed to be a general idea that there were many projects for a new government more important than setting up a program of publications geared to the needs of a new nation such as theirs. Under such circumstances ascertaining just what agencies of the government of Morocco were the proper sources of government publications was quite a research job. For example, the Ministry of Education was certain that the National or General Library was the proper source, while the General Library felt that they were sending everything necessary to IC when they were not even providing the Official Gazette, the most basic document of the new state. It seemed that for a short time during the early part of my stay in Rabat, the capital of Morocco, that every government office interviewed provided a publication connected with some operation of the new government. Under those circumstances nothing else could be done but to find the agencies or the officials, as few in number as possible, who could command access to this maze of publications. Even when that solution was reached there was no certainty that a new re-organization would not shift sources of publication out of range of the key controls set up previously. The best that could be done in Morocco was to

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get acquainted with the present organizational plan of the government as a basis of keeping this control through the key sources. In two others of the new countries, Tunis and Libya, this problem was solved by the discovery of a recently constituted Government Press, where the output could be tapped at the source.

Commercial publications in these new countries presented an entirely different sort of problem. First of all, were there bookstores or distributors of sufficient standing to command the respect and co-operation of authors, presses and the public alike? In considering this possibility, political affiliations had to be scrutinized. The decision made in all three of the new countries of North Africa was that there was no dealer who fulfilled these requirements and could therefore serve the Library of Congress in the capacity of a blanket order dealer. But to reach this decision, small purchases had to be made to test out the dealer. Tunis comes as near as any of the three to having such a dealer.

Commercial dealers in the countries already visited were for the most part keeping abreast of the changing times, except in Egypt where political conditions forced over-cautious treatment of any business program. In all cases the opportunity of checking over with the dealer a body of publications indicating what publications should be sent, achieved results which could hardly have been accomplished in any other way. Only one change in method of acquiring commercial publications was recommended, that of shifting from a priced exchange in Turkey to purchase in Istanbul through Robert College.

Visits to libraries and to collectors, editors and authors proved to be a most useful and necessary part of the field trip. Beyond the mere backstopping of the actual operation of purchase, contacts with the libraries and personalities in the literary field were most valuable in assessing publication trends. Although reference shelves in oriental languages and in Islamic material presented a certain sameness, there was enough variety to justify visits to libraries on that score alone.

Libraries were of three classes. (1) There were the national or general libraries usually a part of a system heading up in a central library in the capital. In Morocco the central library was called the General Library and was supposed to be the head of the whole system. The usual terminology for such central libraries was national library as was the case in Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Iran, Lebanon and Turkey. Branches of such libraries in the provincial cities as in Isfahan and Shiraz often proved to be very important centers of information on any book production and collections in that vicinity. (2) University libraries in places where the

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universities were not recently established had been of great assistance on the former trip. Visits to the universities seen previously in Cairo, Baghdad, Ankara and Damascus and to the American universities in the area, at Beirut, Cairo, and Istanbul demonstrated that it is to these libraries that we must look for progress in library science and for better tools such as national bibliographies. Upon some of the universities in the newer countries, Morocco, Libya, the Sudan and Afghanistan will certainly devolve the responsibility of initiating any advances in library science that can be expected in the near future. (3) Libraries in religious institutions that charitable gifts flow making possible the purchase of additional treasures. In recent years some of the funds have been expended on improving service facilities. Library science and services. Microfilming facilities were generally available throughout the area, representing a great advance over six years ago. It is usually necessary to obtain the microfilm through some agency or office in the capital city, but there was a general knowledge of the value of microfilming and a willingness to cooperate in microfilming projects. All of the centers have this service except Kabul and the Arabian peninsula, where only private commercial facilities are available.

Little progress was noted in the production of national or general bibliographies. Turkey has resumed the printing of its *Turkiye Bibliografyasi*. In Egypt the American University was keeping alive the project proposed several years ago, but the position of the government, without whose co-operation it would be impossible to proceed, was not clear.

In Iran there was a plan to issue a bibliography of works in English similar to that produced for French language materials. The production of a national bibliography will have to wait until the confused relationships between the libraries of government agencies and the libraries of the university faculties can be cleared up.

The idea of establishing union catalogs of the holdings in population centers where there were several libraries or agencies using libraries, or for entire countries aroused much more interest than on the previous visit. The fact that such catalogs would be of great value in producing national bibliographies was recognized and contributed to the favorable reception of the idea.

General conclusions. Certain general conclusions can be drawn which apply to the entire trip in addition to the specific recommendations included in the detailed reports submitted for each country. These conclusions are based on the experience of field trips and the seven years experience in the Section. (1) Field trips are vital to maintenance of the working relationships between the Section and the area it serves. Not only in acquiring



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publications does this importance appear, but in maintaining fresh contacts with the situations and personalities in all parts of the area. Maintaining such a relationship points to field trips of two kinds: (a) Survey trips covering the entire field or as much of it as possible but with briefer stops in each country, except where very important local problems exist.

(b) Specific trips of shorter duration to one or two countries or a special part of the area in order to deal with specific problems or situations.

The 1957 trip was a combination of both kinds, that in 1951 was more of the first kind. The operation of the Sections in the Division of Orientalia makes it difficult for the Heads of the Sections to be away for long periods of time; hence, the suggestion for shorter trips to take care of specific problems. If, however, field trips can only be made every five or six years, they must of necessity be survey trips, since a survey should be made at least that frequently. Absence of bibliographical aids, national and otherwise, on the field and changing political and economic conditions in the area argue the need of a survey more than once in a ten year period.

(2) A second conclusion is that the Near East Section should have additional personnel to serve this important and strategic area. This need becomes more evident when the work of the Section is viewed from the field. Legitimate requests for services and background information warranted by conditions in the area cannot now be fulfilled. Specialized duties incident to the proper growth of the collections have not in the past been adequately performed because of the low level of competence available for these duties. Each of the twenty odd countries and political entities in the area has official publications which should be procured and serviced. In addition to the three major languages, Arabic, Turkish and Persian, there are at least ten other languages and dialects which must receive special attention from employees with proper competence in that language and area. The Section does not have enough persons nor the job level necessary to attract and hold personnel of such competence.

The press of the area is not stationary. Changes in the press require constant review and attention, if the Section is expected to keep its files of newspapers up to date. Files established five years ago should be revised, different papers substituted and gaps filled. Such a service has not been possible with the competence which we now command with frequent changes in the few positions we have. The manner in which the new employees of the Section in the absence of the Head of the Section carried on deserves the highest commendation, but the Section cannot keep such competence at present job levels. (3) The third conclusion is that the countries of the area look to IC for leadership and technical help. They would like IC to take the leadership with projects comparable with the microfilming project at St. Catherine's monastery on Mt. Sinai. There were many questions as to why IC had not produced printed cards for the Arabic language collection and catalogs for the manuscripts in oriental languages. Librarians and especially those engaged in training librarians would like guides to the cataloging of oriental books and the servicing of oriental collections. It would greatly

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facilitate the acquisition of material from this area if such assistance could be given in exchange for publications. These countries through their libraries look to IC for leadership in the kind and quality of bibliographical aids needed for the area. The production of national bibliographies so long needed in this area could be materially aided if IC through its Near East Section had the resources to extend its interest and advice to those facing the bibliographical problems in the field.